

Message Text

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21

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 CU-04 ACDA-19 NIC-01 DRC-01 /140 W

----- 102760

R 091222Z MAY 74

FM AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5163

INFO AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL IZMIR

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, TU

SUBJ: STUDENT CLASHES ESCALATE AT ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY

REF: ISTNBUL 697

SUMMARY: STEADY ESCALATION IN VIOLENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND LEFT-WING STUDENT GROUPS HAS LED TO A THREE-DAY BOYCOTT BY LEFTIST STUDENTS AT THE ECONOMIC AND LAW FACULTIES OF ISTANBUL UNIV. THE DECISION TO CALL BOYCOTT CAME AFTER FOUR DAYS OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS BETWEEN ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE SELF-STYLED "COMMANDO" GROUPS AND STUDENTS WITH LEFTIST VIEWS. THE PROTESTING STUDENTS CLAIM THAT THESE "COMMANDO" UNITS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR ATTACKS BECAUSE OF TACIT COOPERATION BY POLICE AND UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES.

1. THE EVENTS WHICH LED TO THE BOYCOTT DECISION BEGAN ON MAY 5 AND 6 WHEN A GROUP OF SEVERAL HUNDRED "COMMANDOS" MARCHED ON THE ATATURK STUDENT HOSTEL, IN WHICH LEFTIST STUDENTS FORM A MAJORITY. TIMING MOVE TO COINCIDE WITH THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE EXECUTION OF THE MARXIST "ANARCHISTS" GEZMIS, ASLAN AND INAN UNDER THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME,

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"COMMANDOS" ATTACKED THE ATATURK HOSTEL AND BATTLED WITH

RESIDENTS. BY THE TIME THE POLICE BROKE UP THE MELEE, WHICH REPORTEDLY INVOLVED 2000 PARTICIPANTS, SEVERAL HAD BEEN INJURED, SEVENTY-SEVEN OTHERS ARRESTED, AND THE CASE REFERRED TO THE ISTANBUL STATE SECURITY COURT.

2. IN PROTEST OVER THE POLICE'S FAILURE AND ALLEGED UNWILLINGNESS TO PREVENT THE "COMMANDO" ATTACK, A GROUP OF LEFT-ORIENTED STUDENTS CONDUCTED A "SILENT DEMONSTRATION" MAY 6 OUTSIDE THE GATES OF THE UNIVERSITY, BUT "SILENCE" SOON BROKEN BY STUDENTS EULOGIZING GEZMIS AND SUBSEQUENT POLICE INTERVENTION. IN ANSWER TO DEMONSTRATION, A "COMMANDO" GROUP ARMED WITH CLUBS PROVOKED FIGHT ON LAW FACULTY CAMPUS FORCING INTERVENTION BY THE DEAN AND ISTANBUL POLICE. IN EVENING THERE WERE FURTHER ATTACKS ON HOSTELS.

3. CALL FOR BOYCOTT CAME IN ADDRESS TO GROUP OF APPROX. 200 LEFTIST STUDENTS BY PRES. ECONOMICS FACULTY STUDENT UNION. ALTHOUGH SOME CLASSES APPARENTLY HELD, NEWSPAPERS REPORT BOYCOTT SUPPORTERS FORCIBLY PREVENTED PART OF STUDENT BODY FROM ATTENDING CLASSES. MEANWHILE RECTOR OF UNIVERSITY HAS THREATENED SEVERE DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAIST STUDENTS TAKING PART IN BOYCOTT, AND HAS TAKEN INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES IN ANTICIPATION FURTHER VIOLENCE, WHICH SEEMS PROBABLE IN VIEW OF STRONG EMOTIONS INVOLVED.

4. COMMENT: THE INCIDENTS THIS WEEK IN ISTANBUL MARK A NEW STAGE IN CONFLICT BETWEEN IDEOLOGICALLY OPPOSED STUDENTS OF LEFT AND RIGHT THROUGHOUT TURKEY. UNTIL NOW ISTANBUL HAS BEEN SPARED OPEN CLASHES BETWEEN "COMMANDO" GROUPS AND LEFTIST. THE SPREAD OF OPEN CONFLICT TO THE MAJOR UNIVERSITY OF TURKEY'S LARGEST CITY, THEREFORE, IS CAUSE FOR CONCERN, SINCE IT COULD CONCEIVABLY ESCALATE INTO THE KIND OF VIOLENCE WHICH CRIPPLED THE UNIVERSITIES BETWEEN 1969 AND 1971. IN THIS INSTANCE CHARGES BY THE LEFT THAT THE VIOLENCE IS BEING PROVOKED BY EXTREMIST "COMMANDO" GROUPS APPEARS LARGELY ACCURATE. MAY 5 ATTACK ON THE ATATURK OGRENCI YURDU ALMOST CERTAINLY BEGUN BY RIGHTIST STUDENTS. SUCCEEDING INCIDENTS ALSO INDICATE THAT THE RIGHT TOOK INITIATIVE. AS TO WHY THEY HAVE DONE SO, SOME OBSERVERS HERE SUGGEST RIGHT MAY FEEL THAT IT IS IN A GOOD POSITION TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STRIKE AT LEFT, WHICH IS STILL RECOVERING FROM EFFECTS OF DISRUPTION SUFFERED UNDER THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME. OTHERS SUGGEST THAT EFFORT IS TO EMBARRASS RPP-LED GOVERNMENT COALITION AND TO INFLUENCE OUTCOME OF PRESENT EFFORTS PASS AMNESTY LAW. NOR IS IT INCONCEIVABLE THAT CERTAIN UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS IN FACT TACITLY CONDONE THESE ACTIVITIES. A MEMBER OF THE ECONOMICS FACULTY RECENTLY TOLD US HE HAD NOTICED AN ABNORMAL AMOUNT OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG RIGHT-WING

MEMBERS OF FACULTY. WHEATEVER MOTIVE BEHIND ATTACKS,
DANGER NOW IS THAT SELF-PERPETUATING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AND
ARRESTS MAY LEAD TO LARGER DISTURBANCES IN OTHER PARTS OF
CITY.
MACE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, UNIVERSITIES, STUDENT GROUPS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ISTANB01291
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740114-0367
From: ISTANBUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740562/aaaaccxs.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: ISTNBUL 697
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 AUG 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <10 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STUDENT CLASHES ESCALATE AT ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY
TAGS: PINS, TU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005